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**THE VIEW FROM PYONGYANG:  
PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**BY**

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**Prospects for Survival in the 21st Century**

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## ABSTRACT

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The future of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea, is in doubt. The past decade has seen a change in national leadership, with the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994 and the succession of his son, Kim Jong Il. What course will Kim Jong Il choose for himself and his country?

The political structure of the DPRK has been deliberately crafted to focus all meaningful power and decision-making on the person of Kim Jong Il and retains no ability to reform itself. The military serves as the primary organ of regime survival and, while quantitatively impressive, it is increasingly ineffective due to worn out and obsolete equipment. The economy is stagnant and what little production capability exists is used to support the military. Economic reform is minimal and generally limited to unofficial open markets. Kim Jong Il will resist reforms to the economy and any dilution of his powers.

In order to maintain regime survival the North Korean military nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs have become the primary means of extracting foreign economic assistance and political concessions.

U.S. and allied negotiators must present a united front to avoid offering North Korean opportunities to exploit differences, while focusing on technical issues immune to counterpart rhetoric or manipulation in order to advance U.S. strategic interests.



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## PREFACE

My professional introduction to the Korean peninsula was in October 1973. I was a young infantryman assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division at Camp Casey, Republic of Korea. I departed in June 1974 and did not return until the summer of 1995 as a lieutenant colonel in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. The changes in the ROK were immense. I had left a largely agrarian society, with little evidence of a modern industrial development, and returned to traffic jams, air pollution and a booming modern economy.

However, one thing had not changed and that was the threat from the north, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea. As a young private, I knew little of the mysterious country on the other side of the Demilitarized Zone. As the senior intelligence officer for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, I had learned a great deal more.

Following my assignment with the "First Team", I served as the Chief of Current Intelligence and as the Senior J2 Plans officer for C/J-2 Combined Forces Command, United States Forces Korea during 1997-1999. From my daily dealings with the intelligence and policy issues associated with the DPRK, I became fascinated by the survival strategy of the Kim Jong Il regime.

This paper owes a great deal to my co-worker and friend LTC (USA-Retired) James Cheatham, Chief, J2 Plans. His insights and historical knowledge of the Korean peninsula provided the inspiration for this study. I also owe great thanks to Professor Don Boose for his editorial oversight and patience with my attempts at analysis. To them and the thousands of men and women who have served in maintaining the peace in the "Land of the Morning Calm" goes my profound thanks and admiration. The shortcomings of the following paper are entirely mine.



## THE VIEW FROM PYONGYANG: PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

*"The great difference between the real statesman and the pretender is, that the one sees into the future, while the other regards only the present; the one lives by the day, and acts on expedience; the other acts on enduring principles and for immortality."*

— Edmund Burke

### **Introduction**

North Korea, or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), remains one of the world's great political puzzles as the third millennium begins. Supremely isolated, both in a physical and an ideological sense, the country has proven to be the toughest target for intelligence collection and external analysis in recent history. Ironically, the creation of the two Koreas out of a historically united country is directly attributable to American ambivalence during the latter stages of World War II. This historical lack of a clear regional security policy for Northeast Asia has caused the United States to spend the last half of the twentieth century attempting to stabilize the region.

Since the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994, the DPRK has been in strategic stasis. The reign of his son, Kim Jong Il, can be described as politically and economically sterile, a continuation of his father's most insular policies. Economic policies and internal affairs still center on the rigid control of government and society, with xenophobic behavior to the external world. As the National Defense Counsel (NDC) Chairman, General Secretary of the Korean Worker's Party (KWP), and Supreme Commander, Kim Jong Il ensures the national power structure funnels all primary decision making functions to him. No other single person or group currently exists to rival Kim in the North Korean government, party or military organizations. Thus when discussing the present and future of North Korea, it is Kim Jong Il who is the primary decision maker.

As the new millennium begins, Kim Jong Il is entering a critical crossroads concerning the future prospects for his personal survival and that of his country. As one of the few remaining Communist-era totalitarian leaders, Kim's personal beliefs and ambitions form the core of his nation's strategic goals for the future.

From a national perspective, the United States has consistently treated the DPRK government with suspicion and describes it as "... a rogue state that may be failing."<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding such dire predictions, rumors of the DPRK's imminent demise or collapse appear to be premature.<sup>3</sup> Despite severe agricultural production shortfalls and economic depression, the regime of Kim Jong Il has continued to remain in power and continue key national projects, particularly missile and nuclear research. This is a study of the current strategic situation from the perspective of Kim Jong Il, examining political, economic and military elements of national power.<sup>4</sup> I will also review the North Korean style of negotiations. At the conclusion, a possible strategy for survival of the DPRK in the first decade of the twenty-first century will be proposed.

### **Political Element**

Kim Jong Il ascended to supreme leadership of the DPRK through a carefully orchestrated political program designed by his father to allow a hereditary transfer of power upon the elder Kim's death. Beginning in 1980 with his election to high party positions at the Sixth Korean Worker's Party Congress and culminating with his consolidation of power in 1998, Kim Jong Il marched on a steady path to the throne his father left him.<sup>5</sup>

Unwavering military support provides the primary foundation for regime authority. Kim Jong Il has systematically shaped the military into his principal organ of control. The most recent constitutional reforms announced at the 50<sup>th</sup> National Anniversary Supreme People's Assembly in 1998 placed the bulk of the government's power in the National Defense Council (NDC), where Kim serves as Chairman. The other ten members of the NDC consist of seven senior army officers, with three party officials who deal with national economic affairs.<sup>6</sup> The commission is subordinate only to the chairman and does not answer to any other branch of government or the Korean Workers Party (KWP). In short it is Kim's private executive council.

Coupled with his close alliance with the military and channeling of political powers to the NDC, Kim has continued to enhance and perpetuate the cult worship of his father. This state cult deifies his father, provides Kim Jong Il with legitimacy as his heir, and serves to provide the ideological framework to keep the populace in control.

Also, his father went to great lengths to formally associate his son with the generation of senior leaders who had been the bulwark of the senior Kim's reign. The younger Kim was adopted into the older generation's mythology and ideological association with his father.<sup>7</sup> This was a deliberate design to foster a sense of stability and continuity within the leadership. It was notable that no other member of Kim Jong Il's generation was afforded the same elevation and association with the founding fathers of the DPRK.<sup>8</sup> During his progression to power, Kim Jong Il also made use of gradually expanding powers to insure that only those loyal to him advanced within the system.

Although the military and state security apparatus provide the physical means of Kim Jong Il's survival, the entire government, military, and party organizations are designed to support the leader. As Adrian Buzo describes,

The political and governmental institutions of the DPRK are intricate, well organized, and they functioned in support of personal autocracy to a degree unparalleled in the history of Leninist party states. There is no evidence to suggest that competitive factional activity, whether based on sectoral, policy or personality grounds, has been significant under the Kimist personal autocracies.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Prospects for Political Reform***

There is no scope for meaningful political reform in the foreseeable future. The organs of state power have been personalized and consolidated to serve Kim Jong Il. There is simply no mechanism to accomplish political change unless Kim Jong Il desires it or his regime is no longer in power, whether through death or political upheaval. To date, there has been no evidence the younger Kim wishes to implement any formal political changes. From watching the collapse of the former U.S.S.R. and Rumania, Kim recognizes the dangers of unleashing reforms that he either cannot control or could lead to the overthrow of his regime.

### **Economic Element**

Kim Jong Il's political ties and continuance of his father's policies have had a profound impact on the performance of his nation's economy. Contemporary North Korea ranks low in every measure of economic performance and has been in steady decline since the early-1980. This fall has been well documented by foreign analysts.<sup>10</sup> The basic economic problem is associated with,

centrally planned economies (CPEs) exacerbated by the *chuch'e* [sic] ideology of self-reliance and extreme centralization of power: There has been an overemphasis on heavy industry to the detriment of consumer goods and services; there has been over accumulation and misallocation of capital; the infrastructure is in dire condition, . . . outdated technology. . . suppression of international trade. . . shortages of power and parts. . . and famine of unknown magnitude. . .<sup>11</sup>

Chuche, or "self reliance" doctrine, was initiated by Kim Il Sung in the 1950's as part of his domestic industrialization program and development of a nationalist ideology independent of the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Despite the current ills of the North Korean economy, Chuche did contribute to a rapid transformation of the nation's heavy industry sector and overall economic growth. In fact, in 1966 North Korea's per capita export volume was double that of its southern neighbor.<sup>13</sup> However, the shortcomings of Chuche as an economic doctrine did not become apparent until the 1970's when productivity and growth stagnated. The North Korean leadership failed to appreciate the requirements of running an industrialized economy, relying instead on political ideology and mobilization of the labor force. These non-economic remedies failed.

Massive spending on improving the North Korean military capability further compounded the lack of economic expertise. Approximately 20 percent of the economy was devoted to military requirements.<sup>14</sup> This was in keeping with Kim Il Sung's strategy of a military conquest of the Korean peninsula, but starved the economy of reinvestment necessary to maintain and modernize the industrial infrastructure. Heavy industry was simply worn out in the interest of quantitative production quotas.

Attempting to attract foreign investment as a means of economic growth also failed during this era. Despite massive purchases of foreign technology, to include entire factories, the North Korean government was unable to either enhance productivity or pay off its foreign loans, resulting in a sizeable unpaid external debt.<sup>15</sup> Official economic reform since then exists in the attempts by the government to establish the Najin-Sonbong Economic Zone in the Northeast Hamgyong-Pukto province. The results of these special economic zones (SEZ) have been disappointing. Since 1984, foreign investments have been small, approximately \$150 million,<sup>16</sup> and the net effect has been "little more than export enclaves to exploit locally cheap labor."<sup>17</sup>

From the mid-1970s until the late-1980s, the North Korean economy was propped up by foreign aid from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the former Soviet Union. The economic crisis culminated in 1991, when Russia and the PRC demanded cash for exports. Unable to pay for imports, the North Korean economy contracted dramatically.

The lack of petroleum imports had the most far-reaching effects. Fuel for motor vehicles became rationed and scarce. Construction projects ceased and petroleum-based fertilizers were unavailable for farmers. What fuel was available was used by the military. Exercises continued throughout the economic collapse.<sup>18</sup>

The small functioning portion of North Korea's economy permanently supports the military. Foreign aid, intended for the starving masses in the civil sector, is routinely diverted to military units. Despite limited evidence of farmers' markets in major urban centers, little has been done to revive the national economy.

The most chronic failure of the DPRK economic system has been failure to supply basic food requirements to its population. Due to natural disasters such as floods, overuse of chemical fertilizers, deforestation, and unsound agricultural practices, the entire food production effort has collapsed.<sup>19</sup>

Beginning in 1995, widespread natural disasters coupled with unsound agricultural practices resulted in enormous food shortages. The best, unsubstantiated estimates place the number of deaths due to starvation at 2-3 million. Additionally, foreign analysts gave rumors of a military coup in Hamhung in 1995 high credence.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the defacto collapse of the national economy and inability to feed its own population, there is no evidence of any major nationwide reform programs. Economic reform would directly erode the state's control of all aspects of society. Instead the regime's official policy appears to be to maintain the Juche (self-reliance) ideology and rely on acquiring external economic assistance to make up for shortages in domestic production, primarily in agriculture.<sup>21</sup>

The food crisis strikes at the very heart of the issue of regime survival. The influx of foreign relief organizations, the widespread travel of NGOs managing aid distribution, and the abandonment of centralized government control of food distribution have collectively served to reduce direct control of the government.

The government's food production and distribution system has collapsed and was abandoned as the impact of the loss of aid from the PRC and former USSR took effect. The DPRK government first responded by reducing ration allotments and increasing the demands on farmers for increased production while failing to provide needed fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. When these unproductive measures were coupled with floods and other natural disasters, the food crisis both crippled the economy and threatened the government.<sup>22</sup> In 1996, the government formally decentralized the responsibility for food supplies to county administrators. This was followed in 1998 by government announcements that individual families were responsible for their own food needs.

The results of these policy changes have been profound within the DPRK. The entire phenomenon of farmers' markets shows the regime's inability to control the populace and provide for its basic needs. The food available at the markets comes from a variety of sources. Some comes from diverted foreign aid, the bulk from privately cultivated plots, and the remainder from cross border trading with China. Estimates indicate that the farmers' markets now provide 60-70 percent of the food supplies for the people.<sup>23</sup>

Even with marginal improvements due to private cultivation, the overall food assessment remains unfavorable. The latest available (1999) crop assessment estimates are:

Total utilization:	4,765,000 mt (metric tons)
Total availability:	3,472,000 mt
Import Requirement:	1,293,000 mt
Expected food aid:	370,000 mt
Commercial import (est.):	300,000 mt
Uncovered deficit:	623,000 mt <sup>24</sup>

There are secondary effects of the food crisis that have equally disquieting implications for the ruling regime. Foreign aid has demonstrated to the population that the country is dependent on external aid from nations accused of being hard line enemies. Also, local corruption and black marketing has undermined the regime's credibility and popular support. Finally, the greatest negative impact has been on urban dwellers and mountainous regions without adequate cultivable land. With the exception of Pyongyang, the urban areas have suffered a high proportion of mortality and a related collapse of industrial production.

These results demonstrate the government's policy of accepting controlled starvation of selected geographic areas and population sectors. Core sectors, such as the capital region, principal farming areas, the military, and selected industries have received minimum food allowances. Other portions of the country have been left to fend for themselves. This has led to increased population movement and disaffection with the government.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Prospects for Economic Reform***

Kim Jung Il's government has been unable to provide basic economic necessities for the populace. Formal reform initiated within the government is highly unlikely. The root of the lack of reform is Kim Jong Il himself. Kim staunchly adheres to his father's ideology and is averse to any changes that

would threaten regime control.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, changes in the DPRK economic system occur on the margins. The principal examples are special economic zones, joint ventures primarily with South Korean firms, and the development of the "second economy" or black market.

Foreign economic investments are acceptable as long as they do not subvert the North Korean populace. Limited, tightly controlled ventures, such as Hyundai Corporation's tours of Mount Kumgang in North Korea, clearly follow this pattern. Hyundai is paying the DPRK government \$150 million over six months to allow tourist groups to visit the picturesque location. These are heady sums for a government whose leading exports, textiles, only garner \$184 million in revenue annually.<sup>27</sup>

Instead, meaningful economic reforms have occurred informally, with the tacit approval of the government through non-interference. This is the "second economy," or black market, that provides local authorities with increased autonomy and gives citizens a limited ability to cope with shortages.<sup>28</sup> Although the second economy provides short-term relief from widespread shortages, it also saps resources from the state's planned economy, hindering the government's ability to revive its slender remaining economic capability. The second economy will continue to thrive as the government fails to provide food and goods.

### **Military Element**

With total control of the national political organs, Kim Jong Il remains firmly entrenched as the leader. However his survival is dependent on continuing loyalty from the military hierarchy. Since he personally selected the senior leadership, it is likely they will remain committed to him, so long as Kim provides for their needs.

The Ministry of People's Armed Forces (MPAF) is the official controlling body for the military forces of the DPRK. In theory, it answers to the KWP Central People's Committee and the President. This relationship has been modified in the last decade. Since 1992, the party and state have been systematically removed from supervision of the MPAF. Using his position as chairman of the National Defense Council and his role as the Supreme Commander, Kim Jong Il solely controls the military.<sup>29</sup>

The MPAF has enjoyed priority for resources since its creation in 1948. Currently, the MPAF has approximate 1,055,000 on active duty, with an additional 665,000 in reserves and approximately 4 million civilians with some military training available for mobilization.<sup>30</sup>

The Korean People's Army (KPA) comprises the bulk of the MPAF with 923,000 active duty personnel organized into 20 corps, 40 division equivalents, with 3,400 tanks, and 10,600 artillery systems. The air force possesses 611 combat aircraft. The navy is equipped with 26 submarines, 3 frigates, and over 400 coastal combat vessels.<sup>31</sup>

These numbers are very impressive and taken by themselves would suggest that Kim Jong Il possesses a formidable military arsenal. But despite pride of place in North Korea, the military suffers from many shortcomings.<sup>32</sup> The overwhelming bulk of the equipment is obsolete, particularly when compared with South Korean and American combat capabilities. The newest North Korean tank is a

product improved Russian T-62, whose original design dates back to the 1960's. The air force's only modern combat aircraft is the MIG-29, of which it has some 30. Since the MIG-29 is primarily an air defense fighter, its usefulness in an attack on South Korea is minimal. The rest of the aircraft are 1950's and 1960's designs. The navy is equally backward and ill equipped to deal with its potential enemies. The submarines are 1950's vintage designs whose most useful role would be as mine layers to interdict shipping entering ROK ports in war. The rest of the North Korean navy is primarily oriented on supporting infiltration operations and coastal defense.

There are two characteristics of the MPAF's conventional capabilities that give it any credibility as a threat in a general conflict with South Korea and the United States. First is its abundant artillery, which is largely concentrated along the Demilitarized Zone and within firing range of targets in South Korea. In addition to being in range of South Korea, much of the North Korean artillery is dug into prepared firing positions, many of which are tunnels and are difficult to destroy. The second is the sheer quantity of the KPA. Even with abundant, obsolete equipment and large numbers of combat units, victory for the DPRK over the Combined Forces Command (CFC) would be difficult or even impossible. In fact, "The former commander of USFK [United States Forces Korea], General [William] Livsey, stated in 1985 that Korean and US forces were currently able to defeat any renewed aggression from North Korea and the South would achieve a military edge during the 1990s."<sup>33</sup>

Since his ascension to power, Kim Jong Il has attempted to redress the increasing imbalance between the MPAF and CFC. Despite severe energy shortages, the MPAF has maintained its annual training activity and even selectively increased the number of military exercises. It has also added small numbers, approximately 70, to its long-range artillery holdings.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the garrison locations of the bulk of KPA have been forward deployed closer to the DMZ.

Forward deployment, instead of showing North Korea's aggressive intent, may be its way to compensate for qualitative inferiority. That puts it in a position to strike first should war appear imminent, before allied air power can blunt an attack and interdict its long lines of supply, as occurred during the Korean War. "They don't want to be all strung out the way they were the last time," says [Lieutenant] General James R. Clapper, Jr., Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency from 1991 until 1994 and former intelligence chief in the Korea and Pacific commands. "They think the best defense is a good offense." So precarious is the military balance from Pyongyang's vantage point that every time a large-scale exercise takes place in South Korea, the North has to mobilize its forces at considerable expense. "That's why," says Clapper, "they go nuts at Team Spirit."<sup>35</sup>

In summary, the moribund North Korean economy and lack of foreign military or economic assistance insures that the conventional military balance will not favor the security of the DPRK.

### ***Nuclear Weapons***

With grim prospects for addressing the conventional military imbalance, Kim Jong Il and his military leadership have turned to an alternative strategy, nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. There are two primary policy purposes for the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. The first is to possess nuclear weapons, combined with ballistic missiles, as the ultimate deterrent from external military

threats.<sup>36</sup> The second is to use the potential threat of nuclear weapons for leverage in international negotiations, particularly as a means to secure economic aid.<sup>37</sup>

The international political scene has become increasingly unfavorable to the DPRK's strategic interests. The 1988 Olympic games in Seoul brought immense international prestige to South Korea. South Korea established formal relations with the Soviet Union in 1990 and China in 1992.<sup>38</sup> Without any guarantees from former allies with a nuclear retaliatory capability and in keeping with the North Korean Chuche doctrine of self-sufficiency, it seems a natural decision that Kim Il Sung would initiate and his son would perpetuate a deliberate attempt to develop a nuclear weapons capability.<sup>39</sup>

Don Oberdorfer summarizes the DPRK's strategy:

Since the early 1993 . . . , Pyongyang had been using its nuclear program as a bargaining chip to trade for recognition, security assurances, and economic benefits from the United States. A failing and isolated regime with few other cards to play, Pyongyang enhanced its bargaining power whenever its cooperation with the IAEA diminished and the threat increased that it might proceed to manufacture nuclear weapons. At the same time, such trouble making actions, if they went too far, also increased the risk of being confronted and overwhelmed by external forces. By this time, North Korea had become skilled at brinksmanship, increasing its leverage by playing close to the edge of the precipice; the problem was that it wasn't always clear just where the edge was.<sup>40</sup>

The intent has been to keep the DPRK's nuclear program as ambiguous as possible. Demonstration of a nuclear weapons capability, such as an actual detonation, would actually be counterproductive from this standpoint. After all, the international community would only provide foreign aid as an incentive for not having any nuclear weapons capability, not as a reward for their possession.

The DPRK's nuclear program was "frozen" through the personal diplomacy of former President Jimmy Carter and the concurrence of the Clinton administration. The 1994 nuclear crisis was defused and the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) or "Agreed Framework" accord was reached in October 1994.<sup>41</sup> Basically the DPRK stopped its domestic nuclear program in return for foreign heavy fuel oil shipments and the acquisition of two light-water nuclear reactors to replace its own reactors.<sup>42</sup> In effect, the North Koreans finally got what they had been seeking for three years, external security guarantees and foreign economic assistance.<sup>43</sup> The United States froze the DPRK's domestic nuclear program, although doubts remain about the status of possible secret North Korea nuclear weapons.

The latest aspect of the North Korean nuclear program was the Kumchang-ri incident. Kumchang-ri was identified as a potential underground nuclear reactor or reprocessing facility in US intelligence reports released to the public in January 1998. By November 1998, additional intelligence reports claimed that traces of radioactive plutonium had been detected in soil samples from the site and that thousands of workers continued to tunnel at the location. Between August 1998 and April 1999, a series of diplomatic talks resulted in the US pledging agricultural assistance valued at \$177 million in return for multiple US inspection visits to the Kumchang-ri site. From 18-24 May 1999 a formal inspection

was conducted by a US team who reported that the site was not a reactor or reprocessing facility. It could however, be used for such purposes in the future.<sup>44</sup>

As Adrian Buzo aptly describes the results, "In short, disdainful of economic prosperity as an end in itself, inured to hardship and isolation, and patiently willing to accept small and piecemeal concessions from the US along the way, by 1998, the DPRK would have had every reason to be satisfied with the results of its nuclear program."<sup>45</sup>

### ***Ballistic Missiles***

The DPRK's ballistic missile program has much the same strategic flavor as its nuclear program. The salient difference is that North Korea has repeatedly demonstrated its technological capability to develop and successfully launch ballistic missiles. Also, the DPRK has produced and retains in service "hundreds" of SCUD missiles.<sup>46</sup> The newest addition to its capability was the partially successful launch of a Taepodong-1 ballistic missile on 21 August 1998.<sup>47</sup> This missile launch was part of the DPRK's ongoing "missiles for money" program. Previously developed and indigenously produced missiles, such as the Nodong and copies of the Soviet SCUD series, had been sold to numerous foreign buyers, most notably Iran, Syria,<sup>48</sup> and Pakistan.<sup>49</sup>

As a progression from the Taepodong-1 launch, an additional launch of another Taepodong missile was apparently scheduled for August 1999, but never occurred. In exchange for not firing the second Taepodong missile, the United States agreed to lift a trade ban on consumer goods and on air and sea links with North Korea. Although largely symbolic, it was an incremental victory for the DPRK's aim of securing formal security guarantees from the United States.<sup>50</sup>

Although the capability to eventually field a missile that can range the continental United States is a matter of strategic military advantage, it is not the primary reason for continuing with the missile program. Much like its nuclear program, the North Koreans use missiles as a tool of economic trade. Lacking the ability to produce, much less develop, any consumer products suitable for international trade, the DPRK is using what means it has available to extract economic assistance and political security.

### ***Prospects for the North Korean Military***

The future for conventional forces is bleak. Incremental improvements are possible such as additional long-range artillery systems, increased numbers of obsolete aircraft, and possibly one or two naval vessels. Increasing the numbers of soldiers in the MPAF provides no corresponding enhancement of significant combat capability. Quantity has reached the limits of what it can do without a parallel increase in the quality and lethality of the antiquated equipment. The best that can be hoped for is maintaining a very real physical threat through forward deployment near the DMZ.

The prospects for further development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles are much brighter. Although the KEDO "Agreed Framework" has stopped further production of weapons grade nuclear material, there is still uncertainty about previously removed materials and their status. The potential does exist for North Korea to already possess a limited number of nuclear devices, or at least the materials to assemble them if required.

Equally, the missile program can progress with or without launches. The DPRK can either use surrogates such as Pakistan or conduct covert static tests. Also, it appears to be building the infrastructure for ballistic missiles by constructing silos.

The future for both the nuclear and missile programs is dependent on the political and economic gain that can be extracted for their non-development.

### ***A Strategy for Survival***

In proposing a strategy for survival, as viewed by Kim Jong Il, the elements can be readily identified by the evidence already discussed. Political inertia, economic stagnation, and military decline are the immediate prospects for Kim and the DPRK. He does not possess the military means to reunite the Korean peninsula. The sole remaining strategy Kim possesses is the use of nuclear and missile programs to extract international economic assistance and political gain through negotiations.

To simply expect the DPRK to implode or Kim Jong Il to agree to reform his state is unrealistic. The fact that he has remained in power for the past six years despite chronic starvation and economic decline demonstrates the ability of the regime to weather bad times. The guerilla "constant struggle" psychology of the regime provides further protective mechanisms by transferring failures in domestic leadership to external enemies of the state. So long as Kim Jong Il can provide resources to his military guardians, he will remain in power. So long as he can accomplish this without relinquishing power or undertaking economic reform, he will.

The long-term view is that change will only occur incrementally so long as Kim or a successor remains in power. The Chuche doctrine and decades of political doctrinal reinforcement have rendered the entire political power system of North Korea rigid and incapable of adopting any drastic reforms without the risk of collapse.

The internal economic apparatus of the DPRK is decayed to the extent that subsistence existence is the maximum that can be expected from this sector. Even in the best times of the 1960s and 1970s, the national economy was artificially boosted by material assistance from the PRC and USSR.

To meet the basic survival needs of the Kim regime, the tools for garnering foreign aid are few – nuclear energy and weapons, plus ballistic missiles. In short, "Under current circumstances, North Korea has no choice but to pursue negotiations to gain the resources necessary to perpetuate regime survival."<sup>51</sup>

The near term North Korean strategy is quite simple. The key element is continued engagement with the United States, while leveraging every "concession" for tangible advantage. The aim is for the DPRK to receive foreign aid from the PRC and US, balancing the two foreign nations against either. This strategy is already succeeding as evidenced by :

The United States has replaced the Soviet Union as a primary benefactor of North Korea. The United States now feeds more than one-third of all North Koreans, and the U.S.-supported KEDO program supplies almost half of its HFO [heavy fuel oil] needs. This aid frees other resources for North Korea to divert to its WMD and conventional military programs.

U.S. aid to North Korea has grown from zero to more than \$270 million annually, totaling \$645 million over the last five years. Based on current trends, that total will likely exceed \$1 billion next year [2000]. During that same time, North Korea developed missiles capable of striking the United States and became a major drug trafficking and currency-counterfeiting nation.<sup>52</sup>

This will provide sufficient food and energy imports to stave off wide spread starvation, maintain minimum industrial production, and afford the military essential resources for operational readiness.

The immediate end-state will be to seek a negotiated peace treaty with the US and formal diplomatic recognition. From Kim Jong Il's perspective, this would afford him at least a diplomatic guarantee of regime survival and would be a major concession from the US. The other advantageous aspect would be a potential rift between the ROK and US over diplomatic relations with the DPRK.

This strategy has a finite element of time to it. Sufficient progress by the DPRK must be perceived by the US to continue the "carrot" option of the Dr. Perry strategy. During an eight-month period from late-1998 to mid-1999, the former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Dr. William J. Perry, headed a North Korean policy review team at the direction of the President and the National Security Council. His mandate was to review all aspects of U.S. relations with North Korea and to make a comprehensive recommendation on future U.S. policies towards that country. After extensive consultations with both our regional allies and representatives of the DPRK, Dr. Perry published his unclassified recommendations on 12 October 1999.<sup>53</sup>

Dr. Perry's recommendations addressed the current North Korean negotiating strategy and have deliberately built in counterstrategies. The report's key recommendations are: (1) The building of strong lateral coordinating ties with our two principal regional allies, South Korea and Japan. (2) The use of simultaneity, rather than conditional forms of negotiation. (3) Establish a permanent high level-working group within the State Department to deal with the DPRK. (4) Finally, construct a strategy that anticipates potential areas of crisis and maps out coordinated responses before the events unfold. In combination, these recommendations offer the best method for meeting U.S. strategic interests in concert with our allies, while mitigating the advantages of North Korean negotiating tactics.

The US counter-strategy must be to show the DPRK the advantages of abandoning "rogue state" activities in return for external assistance and security guarantees. This can be achieved by providing diplomatic signals that avoid public positions demanding DPRK concessions. The DPRK must be permitted to choose to come around to the US position, rather than submit to foreign diplomatic, military, or political pressure. The political aspect of "saving face" plays prominently in North Korean negotiations and domestic propaganda.<sup>54</sup>

There is a window of opportunity for the United States to positively influence the DPRK in the direction of regional security. In dealing with the "barbarian" North Koreans, we would do well to recognize that they have a valid viewpoint and unique negotiating style. If we wish to reach any long lasting accommodation, we need to stop expecting them to act like a traditional Western European

country or even a "rational" Asian nation. A successful United States policy will require patience, a mix of courtesy, firmness, and subtlety. This will take an American diplomatic adroitness that has only been intermittently evident during the past few decades. Finally, in any negotiations with the DPRK, we need to address their very real concerns for regime survival. If we have no answers for the North Koreans, it is unlikely we will ever have mutual agreement, much less peaceful reunification.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke as quoted in The Forbes Book of Business Quotations, Ted Gorman, ed. (New York, NY: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc. 1997), 790.

<sup>2</sup> National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies. Strategic Assessment 1998: Engaging Power for Peace. (Washington, D.C., US Government Printing Office, 1998), 38.

<sup>3</sup> David S. Maxwell, "Catastrophic Collapse of North Korea: Implications for the United States Military (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> David Jablonsky, "National Power," Department of National Security and Strategy, Core Curriculum Course 2 Readings: Volume I – Part B (Carlisle: US Army War College, 1999), 321-327.

<sup>5</sup> Adrian Buzo, The Guerilla Dynasty (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 105-130.

<sup>6</sup> "Military Leaders Posted to Key Offices", Korea Herald, Nov 98.

<sup>7</sup> Buzo, 111-112,

<sup>8</sup> Buzo, 112.

<sup>9</sup> Buzo, 56.

<sup>10</sup> See Buzo, 120-123. Hong-Tack Chun, "Economic Conditions in North Korea and Prospects for Reform," in Thomas H. Henriksen and Jongryn Mo, eds., North Korea after Kim Il Sung (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1997), 32-49; Also Marcus Noland, "Prospects for the North Korean Economy," in Dae-Sook Suh and Chae-Jin Lee, eds., North Korea after Kim Il Sung, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 33-58.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus Noland, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Buzo, 23-24. *Chuch'e* and *Juche* are synonymous, the use of either form being dependent on the quoted source.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, Korea Approaches Reunification (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1995), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Don Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 98.

<sup>15</sup> Buzo, 89.

<sup>16</sup> Noland, 56.

<sup>17</sup> Noland, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Oberdorfer, 395-397.

<sup>19</sup> Hong-Tack Chun, "Economic Conditions in North Korea and Prospects for Reform," in Thomas H. Henriksen and Jongryn Mo, eds., North Korea after Kim Il Sung, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1997), 34-36.

<sup>20</sup> Oberdorfer (The Two Koreas), 375.

<sup>21</sup> Marcus Noland, "Why North Korea Will Muddle Through," Foreign Affairs, Jul-Aug 97, pp 105-118

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Natisios, "The Politics of Famine in North Korea" United States Institute of Peace. Available from <<http://www.usip.org/oc/sr/sr990802/sr990802.html>>. Internet. Accessed 20 December 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Natisios.

<sup>24</sup> Erich and Marilyn Weingartner, "North Korea: Is Aid the Answer?" Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network, Special Report, December 13, 1999. Available from <<http://cns.miis.edu/pubs.htm>>. Internet. Accessed 20 December 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Natisios.

<sup>26</sup> Buzo, 246.

<sup>27</sup> Dan Oberdorfer, "A Nation With an Iron Fist and an Outstretched Hand" The Washington Post Mar 14 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Scott Snyder, "North Korea's Decline and China's Strategic Dilemma," United States Institute of Peace.

<sup>29</sup> Andrea Matles Savada ed., North Korea A Country Study 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 216-217.

<sup>30</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1998/99 (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185-187.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 186-187.

<sup>32</sup> The Seattle Times (Seattle), 27 September 1997.

<sup>33</sup> Suk Jung Lee Ending the Last Cold War (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1997), 178.

<sup>34</sup> Hideshi Takesada "The North Korean Military Threat under Kim Jong Il" in Thomas H. Henriksen and Jongryn Mo, eds., North Korea after Kim Il Sung (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1997), 74.

<sup>35</sup> Leon V. Sigal, Disarming Strangers – Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>36</sup> Buzo, 196.

<sup>37</sup> Buzo, pp. 202-204. See also Oberdorfer, 336.

<sup>38</sup> Sigal, 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Oberdorfer, 19-20.

<sup>40</sup> Oberdorfer, 305.

<sup>41</sup> Oberdorfer, 326-336.

<sup>42</sup> Sigal, 200-203.

<sup>43</sup> Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," Congressional Research Service Reports available from <http://fas.org/spp/starwars/crs/91-141.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 September 1999. In return for the KEDO agreement, the United States government began negotiations with the DPRK to establish liaison offices with the DPRK and relax economic sanctions.

<sup>44</sup> Center for Nonproliferation Studies, "Uncovering the Truth about North Korea's Alleged Underground Nuclear Facility: The Kumchang-ri Controversy" Monterey Institute of International Studies available from <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/uncover.htm>; Internet; accessed 5 September 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Buzo, 229.

<sup>46</sup> "Northeast Asia," US Department of Defense available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/prolif97/ne\\_asia.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/prolif97/ne_asia.html); Internet; accessed 6 September 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Center for Nonproliferation Studies, "North Korea's Ballistic Missile Program" Monterey Institute of International Studies available from <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/overview.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 September 1999.

<sup>48</sup> "Northeast Asia," US Department of Defense available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/prolif97/ne\\_asia.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/prolif97/ne_asia.html); Internet; accessed 6 September 1999.

<sup>49</sup> "Rockets Overhead," *Economist*, 21 July 1999.

<sup>50</sup> Shim Jae Hoon, "Limits of Brinkmanship," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 30 September 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Scott Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), 144.

<sup>52</sup> Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman, *North Korea Advisory Group Report to the Speaker of the House* (Washington, D.C.: House of Representatives, 29 October 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Dr. William J. Perry **Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations** Unclassified Report, U.S. North Korea Policy Coordinator and Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State Washington, DC, October 12, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Snyder, 89.



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